of Food Adulteration Act and is fit for human consumption.

(c) and (d) Yes Sir. The CBI has registered a Preliminary Enquiry into specific acts of misconduct on the part of any official/organisation.

Storage facility for imported wheat

1435. DR. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether storage facilities were considered before deciding to import wheat from Australia;

(b) if so, why wheat is lying on ports; and

(c) the reasons for import despite adequate wheat stock in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No imported wheat is lying at the ports.

(c) Due to untimely rains during the sowing season, the Ministry of Agriculture had initially estimated that the production of wheat during 1997-98 Rabi Season was likely to be 64.51 million tonnes as against the production of 69.27 million tonnes during the previous year. Government had therefore, decided to import upto 20 lakh tonnes of wheat during 1998-99, of which the STC finalised contracts for import of 15 lakh tonnes (±5%) of wheat from Australia. A total of 14.15 lakh tonnes of wheat has arrived in India against the above contract.

Bridging the gap between domestic demand and supply of Potato, Pulses and Oilseeds

1436. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the volume of annual average domestic demand for potato, pulses and oilseeds and that of domestic production for last five years including the current one; and

(b) how Government have been meeting the demand-supply gap, if any these years and how Government propose to bridge the gap this year as well?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) The year-wise precise estimates of demand in respect of potatoes, oilseeds and pulses are not available. However, as per the tentative estimates, the gap between the demand and supply of edible oils is around 13 lakh tonnes and those of pulses is over 20 lakh tonnes per annum.

(b) Government has put the import of edible oils and pulses under Open General Licence (OGL). The import duty on pulses has been abolished and in respect of edible oils the duty has been reduced from 25% to 15%. Import of selected edible oilseeds has been allowed. Besides, the production of edible oilseeds has increased in the country during the last few years and efforts are being made to step up the production of pulses and potatoes.

Prime Minister's Statement on price-hike

1437. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister has in a public statement, announced recently that the unprecedented price hike of food-items, particularly those of vegetables, is due to natural ('Asmani') factors;

(b) if so, whether it is in variance with the assessment placed by the Cabinet Secretary in a recently held meeting with the Chief Secretaries of the State Governments; and

(c) if so, the assessment of factors responsible for the hike?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is no variance in the assessment placed by the Cabinet Secretary in the recent meeting with the Chief Secretaries of the State Government.

(c) Does not arise.

Lapse of essential commoditites Ordinance

1438Ä SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the "Essential Commodities Act" implemented against the hoarders, black-marketeers and profit makers for the last 16 years is no more effective at present;

(b) the reasons on the basis of which the Government allowed the ordinance to this effect be lapsed in July, 1998;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the States were in favour of continuation of this law when their opinion was sought in this regard last year; and

(d) the complete details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL, SINGH VADAV): (a) and (b) The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 is in force. However, the Essential Commodities (Special Provisions) Act, 1981 which was enacted to make certain special provisions by way of amendments to the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 lapsed on 31.8.1997, After the lapse of Essential commoditites (Special Provisions) Act, 1981 on 31.8.97 two ordinances namely the Essential Commoditites (Special Provisions) Ordinace, 1997 and Essential Commodities (Special Provisions) Second Ordinance 1998 were promulgated on 3.10.97 and 2.1.98 respectively on the lines of the Act. Meanwhile, an Expert Group constituted following the directions of the Government recommended incorporation of the important features of the Essential Commodities (Special Provisions) Act, 1981 in the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. Accordingly, an ordinance, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 1998 was promulgated on 25.4.1998 and also the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 1998 was moved to replace the ordiance. While the Bill was under consideration of the Parliament, the ordinance lapsed. The Bill has been referred to the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

(c) and (d) Yes sir, Except Bihar, Nagaland Manipur and Sikkim and the Union Territory of Daman & Diu which did not respond on the subject, and all other State Govts. and Union Territories have expressed the view that the Essential Commodities (Special Provisions) Act, 1981 had proved to be useful and should be continued further. Some State Govts. had, however, suggested modifications to some of the provisions of the Act.

आयोडीनयुक्त नमक से बढ़ रही थायरायड की समस्या

1439. **श्री रामजीलाल:** क्या खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मामले मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार का ध्यान दिनांक 19 अक्तूबर, 1998 के राष्ट्रीय सहारा में "आयोडीनयुक्त नमक की बिक्री से थायराइड समस्या बढ़ी" शीर्षक से प्रकाशित समाचार की ओर दिलाया गया है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो विशेषज्ञों की राय पर सरकार की क्या प्रतिक्रिया है; और

(ग) लोक हित में सरकार द्वारा इस संबंध में अंतिम निर्णय कब तक लिया जाएगा और इसमें विलम्ब के क्या कारण है?

खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मामलों के मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सत्यपाल सिंह यादव): (क) जी हां।

(ख) और (ग) स्वास्थ्य सेवा महानिदेशालय, राज्यों के स्वास्थ्य निदेशालयों, भारतीय चिकित्सा अनुसंधान